

Perhaps then you'll have a better idea of where you want to go and what to expect.

Being politically active? Well, duh! Get moving! With the one and only exception of traveling around the country from one mass protest to another, pretty much all activism is much easier when you're established in one place, and food and shelter are taken care of. It's just a matter of finding out who's doing what, getting in touch, establishing networks- and if nothing's going on, all the more room for you to start something!

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And now, an incomplete list of some works of art that I've gained something from recently.

Still Life With Woodpecker, Half Asleep in Frog Pajamas, Skinny Legs and All, and Fierce Invalids Home From Hot Climates, by Tom Robbins. I cannot stress enough just how much I think everyone and her mother should read Tom Robbins books. The three books of his I haven't yet read- Another Roadside Attraction, Even Cowgirls Get the Blues, and Jitterbug Perfume- are of course on my reading list, and I'm equally convinced that you should read any of these, too.

The Archaic Revival, by Terence McKenna. This guy's really far out! At times it seems the book was written with the express purpose of convincing the reader to go out and eat psilocybin mushrooms. Long, intelligent to the point of being crazy ramblings on hallucinogens, aliens and space travel, the inner and outer universes, shamanism, Goddess cultures, and the end of history, to name a few...

Awakening the Buddha Within, by Lama Surya Das. A book chock-full of eastern wisdom for our crazy western world. A much-needed slap on the head, for me. Reading it was a humbling experience in that it made me realize just how much I have in common with the businessmen I hate: we come from the same insanely busy, thoughtless, even at times materialistic mindset. This book has just as much to offer you as it did for me- *if your heart and mind are open to it.*

The Mists of Avalon, by Marion Zimmer Bradley. An epic (almost 900 pages) novel about the women behind King Arthur's throne. A very nicely done and well-researched mystical tale, and methinks it feminist in its own special way. Alluring.

The Alphabet Versus the Goddess, by Leonard Shlain. I'm still getting through this one. A well-researched essay of a book going through tons of histories to prove the author's thesis that the advent of written language more or less induced patriarchy and the slaughter of Goddess cultures. Lots of interesting theories on yin/yang, right brain/left brain and female/male dichotomies and their effects on history.

Waking Life (a movie). I just watched this the other night, holding the hand of a new friend. It is a beautiful, vivid, more-real-than-life exploration of the human mind, of the dream state versus how we've come to live through the waking state. An encapturing, transcendent, philosophic and anarchistic movie intended to prove that your dreams are real, your fantasies are possible, and your life is in your own hands.

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write stef: cavegrrrl@excite.com
5481 village green, los angeles, CA, 90016
replies not guaranteed, but letters always appreciated

DROPPING is not the only way OUT

or, **Dropping Out #1.5: further thoughts from the author
for creative youthful dissent**

Today I received a very lonely email from a fourteen-year-old suburbanite waiting to be able to get his GED, requesting ideas to keep him occupied until then. The open letter that follows started as my response to him.

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Here are some tips I wish someone had given me a few years back! And I wish that I had been open enough to really receive them, and make good use of them.

1. Envision life as you think you will want to live it in four years (I guarantee your desires will change, anyway). Now, as different as that lifestyle may be from your current one, do as much as you can here and now to move toward it.

2. Take advantage of every possible resource available to you now that may not be available later.

What does this mean?

Before I start with the series of "questions" to follow, I should give a brief word on #2. What I mean by this is: food and shelter are taken care of for now, for you. After all these years of boring old suburbia, once you've found a friend in your frustration (like CrimethInc itself), it's easy to want to reject these things for a life of adventure that demands you to find them yourself. But if you look at it the right way, having these things out of the way just gives you all the more time and energy to do more creative, powerful things with your time and energy. And being "just another suburban kid" makes you all the less suspicious when it comes to illegal activities, especially if you bathe regularly and dress somewhat "normally". These things get a bit harder when you're a squatter or a dirty, broke kid. Many resources are at your hands now: you are of the age to be able to infiltrate schools (your own or others') without question and pull off all sorts of crazy schemes, for example. You can arrange to have radical speakers at your school; you can put massive amounts of subversive literature in lockers. (Perhaps you can find a way to use the school's copy machine to produce that literature.) And I give special emphasis to this: *you can ignore the classes which offer nothing to you, and squeeze the life out of the ones that could be good.* If you're *absolutely* planning on getting your GED anyway, then it doesn't matter what grades you get *now*, does it? So: Always hated math? Fuck it. Don't do your homework, and read or write for your other interests while in class. But if you have a passion for the opportunities for interesting conversation or explosive essays provided by English or His-story classes, go with it! Give presentations on uprisings or book reports on feminist literature that can radicalize students and teachers alike. For His-story, read books like A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn and Lies My Teacher Told Me (neither of which I've actually read). Perhaps you've always been a science geek? Go with it! There's nothing wrong with gleaning insight from science, as long as it is balanced with your own sense of the world in all its mystery and prehistory, and with respect for ecosystems and life. And I emphatically suggest learning another language while you can!!!! This is so useful, especially if you want to one day get out of the boring old US. Learn what you want to learn and fuck the rest. Don't waste your time- but not all time at school is wasted time. Take advantage of, and activate!, pre-existing groups at your school, or ones that you could

arrange to set up, like a gay-straight alliance, or eco-club. Let group members with good intentions know about upcoming demonstrations in the nearest big city, or ways that they can further contribute to their interests; pass out literature to them. Reach out and don't be afraid! See the school as your playground. And remember that it's not too hard to arrange, with your parents and the school, to take college classes of your choice. The point is here that the constraints of a suburban life, of home and family and school, are half-imagined, and that there is still lots of room for free thought and movement, if you're dedicated to it. So, with that out of the way... consider this.

Do you envision yourself living with friends in a communally-run household? Then dedicate more time to cultivating your friendships, existing ones and potential ones on the horizon. Be daring, speak your truth and be willing to get hurt. Many kids your age are so caught up in battles with their own egos that they unconsciously say hurtful things to others all the time. If you can survive this period of your life socially, then you'll be able to get through anything. But try not to toughen yourself up as a defense mechanism; see if radical honesty and openness can work its wonders. See just how *real* you can make connections with anyone and everyone you know, of all ages: younger siblings or school kids, teachers and parents, family you may feel distant from. Life is neither a game nor a war, but a challenge to dig deeper into every moment, every relationship. If you're stuck in a suburban home and high school for a few years, then squeezing life for all it's worth sure can't mean ignoring those around you. Remember- and this is a hard one!- that many kids who you may want to write off as apathetic, petty, or just plain assholeish are really just as frustrated as you. See if you can break down the superficial walls that go up between people in such hazardous social climates as high schools. Learn to spend more *quality* time around other people, and when to seek solitude. Invite friends over or out, and see if you can do things with them that you'd want to do with friends in a more perfect world.

With a garden and a compost, perhaps? Then there's no reason not to start gardening and composting now! Any space in your parent's yard? See if they'll let you use it. Now is the perfect time to pick up some gardening books and studying all you can, so that by spring you'll be ready to plant. (Oh, how I wish I'd done this! Even now, I know so very little about gardening. I'm going to Hawaii soon, where I hope to FINALLY learn.) And if there's not space in your parents' yard- or even if there is!- why not get an early start at guerilla gardening, right here in the unsuspecting suburbs? Maybe gardening isn't your thing, but it's important to remember just how essential to our human lives it is. If you're at all concerned about what's going on in the world, you should be scared of just how little control we have over what goes into our bodies and how we get it. Becoming self-sufficient starts with keeping ourselves alive, and that means growing our own food and learning about nutrition and health for ourselves!

Working as little as possible to share the rent, and getting as much out of your job as possible? Then learn *now* not to spend money. Perhaps you receive money from your parents or another source? *Save it!* In fact, if you're really bored, get a job now (or when you're sixteen or whenever you can and want to), save the money for when you'll really need it, and exploit the hell out of it in the meantime. Everything has its perks. And build good connections with your coworkers! If you fantasize about pulling scams (which is over-romanticised by many fans of *Evasion*), well, start training yourself. Envision yourself shoplifting a lot? Start now, in moderation, but don't get frivolous, don't steal what you don't need (as that just leads to a materialistic mindset). Perhaps you can steal food staples for a Food Not Bombs group, for example.

Dumpster-diving your food and scavenging furniture and other necessities? Start now, start now, start now. Suburbs are perfect. Do you live near any poorer communities, or areas where there are homeless people? Since your parents are

buying you the food you need for now, and since they probably won't want dumpstered food in their house, use the food you dumpster for that FNB group I think you should start up. Hell, even if you live in a totally wealthy area- serve free community meals anyway, get to know your rich neighbors! Life's not a war, not even a class war.

Making useful crafts and working on interesting projects? Do it now. As far as crafts go: Learn to make rope from things that grow around you, or just have fun at your local corporate crafts store (usually easy to steal from) and learn to make hemp necklaces, or screenprint, or making candles (probably the most useful thing you can do from craft store materials). Even better, go to a library or your local corporate bookstore and pick up some books on making your own shelters (log cabins, thatched roofs, mud houses). It's best to learn now, when the endless resources of libraries and bookstores are wide open to you and the empire has not yet fallen. And do art projects: learn to make woodcuts (you can do this out of linoleum) for those neat artsy prints that get used for wheatpasting; make thought-provoking collages and post them around school.

Riding bikes/walking? Do it now. How do you get around? Do your parents drive you places you could get to independently? Put the extra effort in, get to know your body and your town, and do it yourself. Learn basic bicycle mechanics!!

Having a community? Get to know your neighbors now. Perhaps someone could teach you yoga (never underestimate how awesome yoga can be!!) or gardening or woodcrafting or auto mechanics in exchange for trimming their trees. Hold those community meals. Subvert the suburbs! Set up a distro! If you've got money, invest in some quality literature (I recommend sending a donation of \$20 or so to CrimethInc and requesting a huge box of their free publications, ie Fighting For Our Lives... there are also tons and tons of zine distros out there [I recommend How 2 Distro, how2distro@hotmail.com], and booksellers like AK Press) and run a distro from your room. Set up music trades/gifts with kids at your school: write up and duplicate a list of whatever CDs and records you have that you can record onto tapes or CDs, give it out, and let kids ask you for music they may have never heard before. Encourage them to do the same. Perhaps you can radicalize them through underground music! Write up a calendar of underground music events in the nearest city and give it to musically inclined kids at school. Are there good public or pirate radio stations? Listen to them. Go on them, if you have something to say, or want to publicize a good upcoming event! Have a fruit tree? Bring your bounty to school or other public places and give it out; encourage others to do the same. (Here in LA we have a lemon tree and an aloe plant, and other people have avocado, grapefruit, orange, pomegranate, peach... sage, rosemary, and eucalyptus are also abundant, which are nice smelling). And don't forget how nice it is to go to farmers' markets, if you have them. The smells, the tastes, the vibes, the DIY-ness and the freshness of it all is wonderful; try to get your parents to support the farmers rather than the supermarkets, when possible.

Traveling and seeing more of the world? Perhaps a greater challenge is to see more of the world by staying in place. When's the last time you wandered your town at, oh, five in the morning, as the sky begins to lighten? Try charting the moon's cycles, and rising and setting times (I do this; I can help you if you're clueless), and go out when the moon is up- lots of fun! And take advantage of the trips you *do* get to go on: go off on your own during family vacations, even if it means waiting until everyone's asleep; challenge yourself to find new ways to enjoy boring old field trips. If you want to train-hop someday, now is the time to watch trains go by in your town (perhaps do this enough to get an idea of their schedules), to climb in and on abandoned boxcars and grainers if they're parked anywhere near you. If you want to go to foreign countries, start reading about them now- fictional or factual stories about them, the lands and the peoples.